Flash Lights

David P. McAstocker, S.J.

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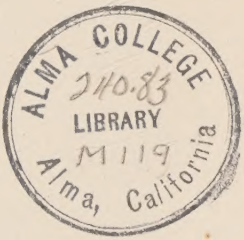
David P. McAstocker, S. J.

Author of

Once Upon a Time
My Ain Laddie
My Friend Across the Way
To a Mountain Stream
Last Rays
and Others



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TO

S. M. L.

"AS ROSES IN DECEMBER"

By Way of Introduction

Success in life is not so much a question of *where* we are as *what* we are. It consists rather in mind than in locality. Neither place nor space has power over the soul, or over the faculties of the soul. Two persons may be thousands of miles apart and yet be intimately united in thoughts and affections; while, conversely, a few individuals may be present in the same room and yet be as widely separated as the poles.

No matter where you be, kind reader, it is the sincere wish of the writer that you share with him the thoughts of these pages. May they aid you to bring out in your soul more and more the likeness of Him Who is not alone our Leader, our Redeemer, but also our King, yet withal, be it ever remembered a sorrowful King, a King Whose throne was the hard, rough wood of the Cross and Whose crown was a crown of thorns.

Tacoma, Washington,
Feast of Christ, the King.
October 28, 1928.

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Flash Lights

ADVERSITY

WE ARE often told that adversity helps us, aids us in the struggle for higher things. But, somehow or other, it is hard to be thoroughly convinced of this fact. The lesson is too difficult for poor human nature to learn.

A modern example of this truth may be had from the life of the late George Brennan, of Chicago. This remarkable man attributed his rise to the dictatorship of Democratic politics in Illinois to an accident in early youth. When a lad in the coal fields he had his leg so badly crushed that it had to be amputated immediately. This they did, sans modern surgical instruments and sans modern methods of anesthetizing patients.

He survived the ordeal. It changed his whole career. He was obliged to earn his bread through mental labors and, therefore, studied and eventually became a successful teacher, insurance agent, politician. He was quite wealthy when he died, and admired by all who came in contact with him. His success came from an amputated leg.

ALONG THE NIAGARA RIVER

A FISHERMAN, while one day following the Niagara River, tells a weird story of suddenly stepping on a nest of rattlesnakes. The unexpected suddenness of death awed him beyond measure. The stench from the foul, hissing tongues was almost unbearable.

Utterly panic stricken, he saw, as in a daze, a dozen or more heads striking at him from different directions. Then consciousness returned and the necessity for immediate action was apparent. He saw a chance to escape, and began at once to hit out with his fishing pole. He fought furiously as only men can who love the gift of life. Stamping about with his feet, swinging his rod in all directions, he finally escaped. Strange to relate he was wholly uninjured. A stout pair of big, rubber boots had helped to save him from a horrible death.

Somewhere St. Paul speaks of having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel. In the business world, in our social contacts, in the humdrum grind of life, we oftentimes suddenly meet up with moral rattlesnakes. Only one weapon will save us in the crisis—the teachings of Jesus Christ.

ATTITUDE IS IMPORTANT

AN INIMICAL spirit toward the world encourages enmities; friction develops friction. The more one tries to press together a handful of dry sand, the quicker will it slip from his grasp. The different pellets have not been disposed one to the other. But moisten the sand, and it becomes united.

Is it not so with our relationships toward one another? Moisten them with human kindness. Kindness and courtesy and gentleness will overcome a great deal of unnecessary friction.

A PARABLE

THE Philosopher questioned the Fool: How does it happen that the majority of converts to the Catholic Church are more sincere, more in earnest than those who have been born and bred in that Faith?

The Fool answered thus: Once upon a time there lived two princes whose parents were extremely wealthy. The younger one was stolen from the castle as a baby by a political opponent of his father and was given over to an old woman, who brought up the lad in poverty and suffering. So great were his privations that oftentimes he went for days without food. The older boy lived in the lap of luxury with all things at his disposal, yet he was not satisfied. In some mysterious way he felt he had been tricked in life and cheated out of his just meed of enjoyment. He indulged a flair for the poor, threw a glamor of romance about their lives, and extolled their lot as a much happier one than his own, much to the sorrow and anxiety of his parents.

After a number of years the conscience of the wicked hag troubled her so much that she revealed the boy's identity and restored him to his parents.

They showered upon him everything that wealth and position could bestow, and he in turn was grateful—deeply grateful and contented. He showed his attachment and love for his parents by obeying their slightest wish, by never causing them any worry or sorrow. Not so the older boy! He remained an ungrateful wretch, dissatisfied with everything and everybody all the days of his life.

BAPTISM

THERE are certain Dragon Flies in Africa devoid of all color and usefulness, yet as soon as a drop of water falls upon them, these creatures become resplendent with iridescent colors and are empowered with such strength that they fly away on their chief errand in life, catching death-giving mosquitos.

Thus the saving water of Baptism falling upon the soul of the creature makes him a child of God. With the God-given strength of this sacrament, a creature without spiritual force of his own goes forth on his mission of love and mercy, fighting to the end, evil and corruption and giving the death blow to the enemy of souls.

BROKEN HOMES

IN THE early days of the West, the law was of necessity in the hands of the community whose members would form a posse, whenever a wrong had been perpetrated, go out and get their man, killer or thief, and judge him and sentence him. Horse stealing, cattle lifting, were punishable by death.

There would be less husband stealing, less wife lifting, if that law were in existence today and applied to the thief of either sex that broke up a home. Our present civilization connives at unfaithfulness. We resent the theft of a steer more than we do the loss of a husband or wife. What price, civilization!

There are certain things that are full of moral turpitude whether popular sentiment thinks so or not. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word shall not pass. God's word in the matter is this:

If any man commit adultery with the wife of another, and defile his neighbor's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress. —Lev. xx, 10.

CHARITABLE JUDGMENTS

HUMAN beings are very much like icebergs. We see only a small portion of them and nothing of the hidden currents and cross currents which drag them this way and that way.

I fancy we would not sit and judge our neighbor so frequently as we do, did we but ponder well over the small amount of data we possess. We perceive only the external act and nothing at all of the motive actuating it.

LIGHTS

COURTESY

WHEN James A. Garfield was a boy he wrote to the presidents of Brown, Yale, and Williams colleges asking for the necessary qualifications for admittance to their respective institutions. The Yale president made a formal reply and so did the man of Brown's. Likewise the Williams' president, but he added one more line:

"We shall be glad to do what we can for you."

It took just about a second to write that line and it took about the same amount of time for Garfield to decide. As a result of one line of courtesy, Williams has the honor of having graduated a President of the United States, of having at this moment his son as her own president, and all because of a little courteous reply to a letter.

CRUTCHES

IT WAS some weeks after a serious operation that I received them. How well do I recall the incident. For months I had dwelt in the shadows close to the drear tomb of death, and, to one in such a condition, the warmth and heat and sunshine of a glorious day in spring hold a peculiar attraction. I fancy the doctor, coming into my room, saw the look of wistfulness in my eyes, the yearning in my soul to see again the bright gay world without; for he quickly called the nurse and whispered mysteriously in her ear. She returned as if by magic in a few moments, carrying a pair of crutches.

The first effort was a torturous one. It caused me to faint and grow limp. But soon no energy was required at all; I grew to like my props—those adminicula that permitted me to travel from a bleak room in a hospital into God's fresh air and sunshine.

Three months passed, and I grew fondly attached to these crutches. One day while entering the door of the hospital the doctor accosted me again:

"Fling away those crutches, you will soon depend on them entirely. If you continue to use them you

will never again be able to walk erect and stalwart as a man should."

Fling away those crutches! Fling away those crutches that hamper you from walking erect and directly to God—those props of human friendships, material comforts that warp your soul and keep it weak and dependent.

DIVERSITY OF ACTION

THE prudent farmer is always careful to rotate the various crops in such a manner as not to render his acres barren and unproductive. The right kind of seed at the proper time not alone assures a bountiful harvest, if weather conditions be favorable, but likewise enriches and fertilizes the soil as well.

Similarly, in expending human energy, in working, one may accomplish considerably more by a judicious change from one avenue of endeavor to another of a different nature than were he to toil persistently at one staid task. The reason is obvious. The former mode of procedure, because of its diversity, is less fatiguing on the system, while the latter, because of its lack of variation, calls into action the same nerves, the same movements, each day without any thought being taken of the body as a whole. A laborer who daily digs in a ditch is quite likely to suffer from pains in the back. He might forestall such a condition and increase his physical fitness did he occasionally, say, guide a wheelbarrow.

J. Gielen

DEUS EX MACHINA

WE WORSHIP the great god, Fact. We devoutly bend the knee to any and all achievements. We have a special flair for new inventions, much the same as a child has for a new toy. We have about us machines of every description, and some maliciously say we have machines in our heads—that we think in terms of machinery. All very well; and yet sometimes a god comes forth from the machine. He did during the war. He was a god of destruction. We worshipped him as god of advancement and enlightenment and he used our special talents of invention to annihilate mankind, and right wonderfully did he succeed!

Inventions are very good in their place, but they are material in matter and aim. There is such a thing as having too much electric light and too little starlight, too much moonshine and too little sunshine!

DOING NOTHING SUPERBLY

THE trio had been closely associated since seminary days; and the strenuous duties of parish work did not, in their case, break up the friendships of earlier years. Each week they met at a designated rectory and, after dinner, they would retire for an hour or two together, rehearing old stories, old difficulties, old ambitions.

Father John had always desired to be a preacher, and recent years had—laus Deo!—brought him a fair meed of success. Father Joseph had a penchant for writing, and lately his manuscripts were not returned as regularly as heretofore. His work was becoming favorably known. This was indeed encouraging!

The third member of the little coterie was Father Claude. To all intents and purposes, he had no pet hobbies. When the talk would come to an end in the afternoon, he would quietly mention that it was time for Vespers. When an evening session was in progress, he it was who invariably suggested that they had just time to make their examen and be in bed per schedule. Always unmindful of self, it was he who encouraged the others along their

J. Gielens.

chosen road. And, better still, it was he who by his silent example showed the others how necessary it is to perform spiritual duties punctually and thoroughly.

No wonder then that when an old-time friend inquired of Father John as to what Father Claude was doing, he received this reply:

"Doing? He's doing nothing—nothing extraordinary, but he's doing it superbly." What an encomium!

DREAMS

LIKE the Chinaman with his opium pipe, we may squander precious time in idle dreaming. However, in view of the dynamic life we lead, because of the hectic existence that is ours, dreaming, in the sense of orderly reflection, is of paramount importance. Dreams are more enduring than granite. If our age be but one of brick and mortar, it will soon fall into oblivion. We may be erecting many Woolworth buildings, but are we writing any Iliads? Greece—where is it today? The crumbling Acropolis reminds us of its fate. Greece has passed, but the soul of Greece remains. The dreams that an old blind poet dreamed, and the songs he sang are our heritage today. Homer lives. For:

"One man with a dream shall go forth and conquer
a crown,
And three with a new song's measure shall trample
a kingdom down."

EQUATIONS

MOST of the discontent in the world and the failures in attaining life's noblest purposes may be attributed to false equations. For instance, we take it for granted that Prosperity equals Happiness, whereas happiness generally vanishes with Success. We do not hesitate to affirm that Adversity equals Misery, when, large and by far, adversity accepted in the right spirit usually leads to true Eternal Happiness.

Another wrong equation is to the effect that it is difficult to live in the Catholic Church, but sweet and consoling to die in it; this would make religion, as it were, a very ghastly thing, suitable only for sickness and death and funerals. There are other uses for flowers than covering coffins. They were meant, like the sun, to be an intricate part of our existence; to warm us by their beauty and to refresh us with their fragrance. In other words, the Catholic Church is concerned not alone with sending men to heaven and keeping them out of hell, but is also vitally concerned in bringing heaven to them while they live and keeping hell out of their hearts while they exist here below.

FROM THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKETH

IT IS useless—nay worse than useless—for us to attempt anything for God's glory without previously saturating ourselves with the truths of Christianity.

"If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels," says St. Paul, "and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass."[1] We become like sounding brass and tinkling cymbals—we are indeed a laughing stock before men, unless our lives and our whole being be wrapped up entirely in the cause we profess.

You cannot use a fountain pen without first filling it with ink; you cannot squeeze a sponge unless it be saturated; you will find it impossible to run an automobile without gas; nor can you turn on the electric switch unless it be connected with the power plant. No one gives what he has not, is true in spiritual affairs as in temporal matters.

[1] I Paul Cor. xiii, 1.

GETTING RID OF SINS

THERE are three ways of clearing a forest. One is to chop down the trees one by one, and then by means of horses and chains, tear up the roots—a very laborious manner and slow in the extreme. A second way is to place dynamite underneath the roots and blow each one up. This is quicker but still quite slow; for it is necessary to fill up the holes, carry off the logs, get rid of the useless matter and so on. The third way is the surest and best—set fire to the trees and burn up the whole forest.

There are three ways of ridding our souls of sins and imperfections. The first means is the particular examen. Take each defect, cut it down and then work laboriously to eradicate the roots.

A second method is adopted when the death of an intimate friend or companion shows us how near we were ourselves to destruction. Receiving a clear light from God that shows us the peril of our situation, we immediately cut off that dangerous attachment, that occasion of sin, or whatever else it may be.

The third way is to burn up all our sins with the Love of God.

HE ALSO RAN

SPORT writers, in reporting the names of the three horses that are first to cross the tape at the finish, generally conclude by enumerating the rest of the field, saying "they also ran."

In such races, followers of the turf will tell you that a thoroughbred loses simply because the jockey does not know sufficiently well the stamina of his mount; and is not completely awake to the fact that the end is imminent. As a consequence, the final spurt is not sufficient to send him across as a victor.

Is this not quite true of life? How many of us jog along unconcernedly, oblivious of our spiritual weakness and the closeness of eternity. We start too late to make a successful finish.

Once an old man ran three or four blocks to catch a train. He arrived at the station just in time to see the express disappear around the bend. Dejectedly turning to the station agent, he said:

"Well, I suppose I didn't run fast enough!"

"Oh," replied the agent, "You ran well—very well; but you didn't start soon enough."

HUMAN SERPENTS

THE collector bought the old ring in Italy, and was much taken with his bargain. It was designed in the form of a serpent and, in size at least, it reminded him somewhat of the large turquoise circlets so much in favor among the youth of today.

After wearing it for a few hours his finger began to swell to alarming proportions. The doctor was called, and he discovered a small hole beneath the serpent's head whence poison had dropped on the finger. As good fortune would have it, the antiquity of the ring had weakened the deadly strength of the poison that dwelt within it.

When an ordinary rattlesnake dies, it has no resurrection. It is dead forever. But when the rattlesnake type of human dies, he oftentimes leaves behind in his writings, in the bad example he has given, poison that lasts for centuries to come.

INSPIRATION ROCK

DOWN in the broad, vast Southwest, close to Zuni, stands a gigantic rock. The Spaniards call it El Morro; the Americans have named it Inspiration Rock. In the early days of the Spanish Caballeros, when traveling was extremely dangerous, not only from hostile Indians, but from the hardships of the desert as well, from heat and dust, these men invariably stopped by the rock and carved: "Pasó por aquí!" with their names and their birth places in old Spain inscribed below.

Pasó por aquí! If we wish people to know us, if we desire to be remembered, then must we write our names in acts of kindness and of service on the rock of life.

Verily, if we act in this manner, our names will be in perpetual benediction. Has not the Eternal Truth said that He would always remember the cup of cold water given in His Name? And did He not single out an unknown Jewess and write her name on the enduring tablet of Christianity because she had done a service to Him? The Second Great Commandment has its royal recompense. And the man or woman whose measure of kindness, heaped

up and running over, is always ready for the need of suffering humanity, cannot enter the Church without finding a reminder in the gratefulness of the Master to Veronica, that Jesus still loves the poor and that the towel of service that wipes away tears of sorrow and blood, will still be found with God's blessing, God's gratitude upon it.

"Count that day lost whose low descending sun,
Views from thy hand no worthy action done."

I SHALL LIVE FOREVER

THE American humorist, Will Rogers, asked Benito Mussolini what Italy would do when he died. He replied, "I am not going to die."

Mussolini meant that his ideals and principles would live long after he was buried. But there is only one type of man that really and actually lives on after death, in the hearts of people, and that is the man of God. The names of Francis, Dominic, Ignatius, and Theresa are heard as frequently today as in the days following their heroic lives and deaths.

MARY'S PROTECTION

THEY come from the Sodality meeting, these devout followers of Mary, in a happy, contented frame of mind. They stop a moment to speak to a companion; they tease one another; they laugh and play. Yet no outsider may with impunity become familiar with these girls. The protection, the aura, as it were, of our Immaculate Queen is about them. Invisible? Yes. But none the less real as it was on that May day in the year 1527 when the people of Frascati called on her for protection from the menacing hordes of barbarians that had ravaged the City of Rome. Then she commanded with an irresistible voice:

"Back, soldiers, back! This Land is mine!"

Frascati with its inhabitants was saved. Now with no less authority she says to those who menace the eternal welfare of her chosen ones:

"Back, tempters, back! This soul is mine!"

MEDITATION

THERE is considerable dissatisfaction on this globe of ours at present. There are wars among nations; there are wars among individuals. There are homicides and suicides because men are thinking of external matters and not of internal things that are to their peace. We are interested in others but neglect ourselves. Yet only a fool questions others, the wise man questions himself.

Because of this lack of introspection, we constantly endeavor to escape from ourselves. We have not the capacity of entertaining self, so others must entertain us. Hence industrial palaces are not so frequently seen as pleasure palaces. Hence that urge for traveling from place to place, seeking diversion, sighing for the unattainable, never stopping to ponder that humdrum is not *where* we are. It's *what* we are.

"The Kingdom of God is within you." The scholar has books to supply recreation. The man of God has his saints and heavenly friends to commune with. Such persons find peace and happiness under any circumstance, favorable or unfavorable, for peace is something internal and does not depend

on external events. They are equally at home in Iceland or in the tropics, for they have their friends always.

We Catholics are singularly blessed in this regard. We have our Friend of Friends, Christ in the Blessed Eucharist. Whether it's New York or Bagdad, Rome or Timbuctoo matters not. Christ is there. There's no reason to be discouraged, for it's not where you are but who you are that really counts.

MINUTIAE

WE ARE often told that little difficulties occasion tremendous disasters. And, unfortunately, it is true. A tiny match may ignite an entire town; a small hole may sink a great ship; a mere sound in the high Alps may occasion an avalanche.

But seldom do we hear the same truth broadcasted from a positive standpoint—that little fulfillments result in gigantic successes. Yet undoubtedly this, too, is a fact. The added atom of pertinacity brings victory; just another stroke of the pick lays open a vein of gold; another extra hard knock and the door opens.

Especially is this true in the spiritual world. You throw out a little act of kindness; and, like a pebble cast into a lake, it is forgotten. But the ripples of influence broaden until they reach the farthest shore. You speak a charitable word, and give good example and the results are, as it were, infinite, everlasting.

Just the other day a very cultured Jew came to me to see if I could give him any direction in regard to writing for the Church, and of things Catholic. He told me that he owed his conversion to an old

Irish servant-maid whom he saw every Sunday morning getting out at an early hour in order to hear Mass and return in time to prepare breakfast and arrange the other work that duty imposed upon her.

MODERN MARRIAGES

UNCLE JOE CANNON, toward the end of his career, remarked to a friend that he did not fear for the future of the Republic because the average American citizen was endowed with considerable common sense and made use of it, too. A sage remark from a wise old patriot.

Our reaction from the insipid vaporings of a recent juvenile court judge anent "Companionate Marriages" is another incident in point. We did not take the judge too seriously. Some may have smiled a little and uttered: "Tut, tut!" but that was all. And now, I fancy, the little ripple is over. How unwise even to have suggested such a course. You can never legalize something which God outlawed in the hearts of men from the beginning. The judge endeavored to perfect what (he thought) would be a popular sachet. This perfume was destined to scent society so that it could live its own life and still remain inoffensive. The good man forgot that there are certain stenches that persist. They will not be denied—the odor of a skunk, for example. When one comes in contact with impurity, it is much the same. Only by burning, only by searing the soul with contrition and confession does the smell evaporate.

MONEY

"WHEN my boy grows up," a Catholic doctor remarked to me the other day—"when my boy grows up I want him to make plenty of money. I want him to go into business; for money gives social prestige and culture."

That same physician would never recommend carbolic acid as a means of prolonging life. He would laugh at such a suggestion. And yet it is just as foolish as to urge a young man on the threshold of life to aim at material prosperity. Look at the majority of children of wealthy parents today. The greater number of them are ne'er-do-wells, human parasites who never amount to anything; for well has the poet remarked:

"Where wealth accumulates, men decay."

Sturdy trees are not found in hothouses. No! We always discover them on wind-swept hills, pitting their strength against the elements. And culture, forsooth; The most cultured One among the sons of men despised money, and placed it as a barrier toward union with Him.

MONUMENTS THAT WILL ENDURE FOREVER

NO MONUMENT that stands today has back of it so long a history as the Sphinx of Egypt. Its antiquity has been set at anywhere from 10,000 B.C. to 28,000 B.C. It has brooded over the sands of the desert so long that it has come to be thought of as enduring forever. The lighthouse King Ptolemy Philadelphus built on the Island of Pharos no longer hurls its rays across a darkening sea. The Colossus of Rhodes has disappeared; the Gardens of Semiramis at Babylon are dust. And now, we learn that the past few years have seen extensive ravages on the famous Sphinx itself. Like a man that has lived long past his alloted time, it, too, is beginning to show its age.

Some time ago a group of tourists came out from the hotel at the Pyramids and were viewing the Sphinx by moonlight, taking in all the weirdness of its majesty, when they were startled by a sudden noise. Before their very eyes, a huge portion of the head-dress crashed to the ground and crumbled into fragments.

It is the way with the works of man. He dreams

of perpetuating his name in stone or bronze but, sooner or later, they will be shattered. These things shall pass away. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away."[1] There is only one monument we can and should erect, which the grasping hand of time is powerless to destroy—a monument of good deeds and kind words. A kind heart beats no more generously under a millionaire's vest than under that of a ragged pauper. Therefore, while we have the opportunity, let us lay up treasures in heaven where the moth and the rust cannot enter and destroy the labor of a lifetime.

[1]Mark xiii, 31.

MORAL COURAGE

THERE are men who act squarely and aboveboard with their fellow men, but do not deal in the same manner with their Creator; there are those who fight honestly and cleanly with their competitors in the business world, but act cravenly and dishonestly with their God. This is another way of saying that there are physical heroes and moral cowards. There are men who, in the battle of life, will rise after a knockdown and gamely fight again and win and be proclaimed courageous. And these same men will fall before the smallest temptation as Peter did before the words of a serving maid.

I knew a young pugilist a few years ago who attained the distinction of being champion in his class. He was not alone a physical hero; he was a moral champion as well. Picture to yourself a young lad of twenty-four with fame, glory, and the gifts of sudden eminence quickly bestowed upon him. Shower him with money and hero worship; let him hear the plaudits of the multitudes and be cheered even as he passes along the street; have men and women alike crane their necks to see him, speak to him, and admire him. How many young

men will stand up under such a battering? Very few! But he did.

"I am infinitely more proud of the fact that I came through those days clean than that I won a championship. I boast far more of the fact that I lived cleanly and retained my belief in myself and moral courage, than I do of the fact that I got up after ring knockdowns and that men called me game." Words of a real hero.

NOT HEARERS BUT DOERS

A MODERN writer, speaking of his life as a soldier, has this to say: "I made up my mind to be the best soldier possible from the very day I entered the army. This was not a scheming on my part for personal gain; it was a deep need in my nature of what I believed and still hold onto as my life's dedication; namely, that once a man sets up to be an expounder of an idea or of a new school of thought, he must consistently and intensively live the daily life and fight battles for the doctrines that he teaches, at any cost, until victory—unto the end!"

What an anomaly to see a soldier not amenable to discipline, afraid of dangerous places, lacking in courage!

But a greater anomaly is to meet Catholics who are unmortified, whose lives are a disgrace to the calling they profess! After all is said and done the word "Christian" means something. It is like any other label. It is a promise of quality inside the can.

OBEDIENCE

I JUST saw a man killed. He endeavored to cross in his automobile in front of our train, a fast express, and he lost. When I reached him the vital spark was gone. Strange, too, for he was past what we consider the indiscreet time of life; a man well over middle age. The approach was visible for miles and, added to this, there were warnings posted:

STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!

Human laws are not efficacious enough to prevent all foolhardiness; but in the supernatural order there is an ægis that precludes moral wrecks. On the one hand, it safeguards a person from exposing himself unnecessarily to obvious dangers, and again it will stabilize a weakling—it wipes out both rashness and cowardice. It subjects to reason the romantic enthusiasm of the young Levite, and it fortifies and sustains the arduous hardships of the missionary. This shield is obedience.

"The obedient man shall speak of victories."

PERFECT CONTROL

SLOWLY through the fog of the harbor waters, the ocean giant feels its way. Mighty engines, which only a few hours before made man the master of rushing mountainous seas, have been stilled—stilled because their brute power, the victor of terrific onslaught, is not able by itself to bring the ship to dock in safety. A little tug, providing the accurate control required, is master of the immense liner. Every Goliath has a vulnerable spot.

Brute power is the servant of man only as long as he keeps it under close control. Electric motors, which crush rock to fine powder, which carry tons of steel to dizzy heights, which bend cold metal with ease, this brute power turns destructive the moment it escapes control.

The Catholic idea behind mortification is mostly —control of self. A saintly man is one who has all his spiritual powers in hand. He is captain of his soul at all times and in all circumstances. Like the strings of an old Strad, he is perfectly attuned and answers to the slightest touch.

RASH JUDGMENTS

I MET Geoffrey Clarkson while making my daily round of calls at the hospital. My first impression was one of astonishment at the extraordinary beauty of his face and profile. A heavy mass of black hair brought out by contrast the white olive complexion. Added to this, he possessed a deeply spiritual face, and a winning personality. All in all, he seemed a singularly gifted individual. Imagine my astonishment, when the nurse informed me that he was very cranky and difficult to wait upon. I verified this accusation later from another nurse when she told me that he had objected that very morning because his face towel was sour. It was a deep disappointment to me and I did not seek his company after that—I rather avoided him. I had come to the conclusion that he was just a good-looking fop.

Then, one day, I took to bed—just across the hall from where the fop was quartered. After a time I began to improve, and, eventually, was allowed to sit up an hour or two each afternoon. On one of these occasions, a timorous knock sounded on my door. My visitor was the good-looker from across

the hall. I had never seen him except in bed; and now, it developed, that he had a withered leg, and always made use of crutches. Somehow my heart went out instinctively toward that young man. And then I heard his story. A victim of spinal meningitis from early boyhood, he was, of necessity, obliged to associate with his sisters and their girl friends. He ardently longed to be a ball player, to associate with athletes, to be one himself. But these things had been denied him. By force of circumstances and environment he had acquired many feminine traits, though at heart he always was and would be a real manly man.

And so, after he had left me, I asked pardon of the good God for the unjust estimation I had entertained, and then and there resolved that I would leave judgments to Him Who alone is capable of seeing the innermost heart—the All-wise and Infinitely merciful God.

RETREATS

EVERY age has its leaders. This is the age of transportation. Transportation of men and goods by motor. Transportation of music and speech by radio. We cannot be still; we must be moving.

Every age also supplies spiritual antidotes for material maladies. Our penchant for change, for diversion, for new scenery must be counteracted by spiritual journeying. If we must take joy rides, let them be that in reality—let us go to those sanctuaries where joy and peace abide. If we must travel, let us go by the Appian Way and ask the Master in what direction we are trending. If we must be transported, let it be to those "shining mountain tops" where we may glimpse that eternal patria of ours whose beauties and glories are so little appreciated here below.

RESIGNATION

THERE are certain obstacles that cannot be fought; there are many hardships we cannot be rid of, but which we must of necessity bear. A quiet, courageous acceptance is our only course to pursue; it is the wisest way to act.

Tourists in southern Asia oftentimes meet up with a treacherous wind while crossing the desert. This wind raises the dust and sand to such a degree as to make the journey impossible. The guide, however, knows how to meet the situation. He makes the travelers dismount and cover themselves with their blankets. Quietly they rest until the storm passes and the monsoon subsides. Then, when the sun again appears, the travelers brush off the dust and continue on their way, none the worse from the experience they have undergone.

SAFEGUARDS

'TIS winter. Trees are bare and the skies are dull gray. Traveling along on the train, one has no difficulty in picking out the nest of the robin, oriole, and dickcissal; for Nature no longer needs to protect their habitat. Their homes are broken up and they have gone to other climes. But when that family life existed, Nature lent her green leaves and the sun sent trickery shadows to protect it from prying eyes. It was considered as something sacred, something to be guarded at all costs.

God has also thrown safeguards about the human family for He considers that life sacred and essential to real happiness. For this reason, when His Divine Son chose to exemplify the beauty and attractiveness of the home virtues, He selected a town called Nazareth, which means in Hebrew, "The Guarded One." And the hill above the little town was named Nazara, "The Guarding One." And this to demonstrate clearly to us that all human forces should unite to protect this important unit. Church, State, and Nature should be one in rendering immune from harm this all-important factor for

human advancement and peace. Society's chain is composed of different family links; and society's chain, be it remembered, is only as strong as its weakest home link. A rather appalling thought to real Americans of today!

SEMPER FIDELIS

PERHAPS the most dramatic picture in "The Newcomes" is where Thackeray describes the death of the colonel. The old man is delirious and his mind wanders without sequence over the incidents in his life that had impressed themselves vividly upon his memory. Now he is a boy at school; again he is a father, worrying about his only son; finally he is the soldier fighting in India the battles of his country. With one supreme effort he attempts to sit up in bed, drags his arm from the coverlet, mutters the word, "Adsum"; and then falls back dead.

"Adsum! Present!"

Long before the final call comes there are many others to be answered. There are daily demands upon us. Times when our presence is needed to console the afflicted, to encourage the faltering, to fortify the timid, to instruct the ignorant. And, if we are to lead a full, Christian life, then must we be "there" to assist the needs of suffering humanity. At times it will mean a great struggle to be at hand when the neighbor calls; it may even entail a supreme effort to answer the roll call, but the Christian warrior no less than the soldier of earth must

be one that can be relied upon. He, above all others, must be prepared to throw everything aside, and, when the interests of God or the good of his brother requires it, promptly answer the summons. "Adsum!"

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

PARSIMONY marks most of our dealings with the neighbor. We pay only the required amount for goods bought—not a cent more. When striking a bargain we are extremely keen not to allow ourselves to be cheated. Always we demand our "pound of flesh."

However, this human trait has one exception. We are not economical when it comes to speech. Yet why this exception? We are aware that words are dangerous weapons and still we make use of them as though they were perfectly harmless. We multiply them without necessity. When one would suffice we employ two dozen. Generally speaking, the expenditure is a useless one both to the speaker and to his cause. For, as a rule, weary, sonorous sentences neither add prestige to the man, nor do they aid the side he espouses.

Philip of Macedonia sent this message to the Spartans: "If I enter Laconia, I will level Lacedaemon to the ground." The ephors replied very laconically: "If."

No message could have been stronger. Educated to say much in a few words, the Spartans realized

that what was left unsaid is vastly more important than what is written at length.

How parsimonious, then, we should be in speech when a word said or written is as difficult to recall as it is to stem the flood of a broken dam.

"We are master of the unspoken word; the spoken word is master of us."

SOUVENIRS

THE mother was all expectancy, for the boy—her boy—was coming home to her. The weeks of waiting were now over. After his return from France, he had sojourned in New York for two months. She could not understand this delay. "Business," he had told her, "required his presence there." That was all. But now business was a thing of the past. He was arriving this very evening.

How would he look—thin, gaunt, weary? Probably so, for he had said in one of his letters that he needed rest and peace and repose. What souvenirs would he have? Never had he taken a trip or been absent from home for a night without bringing back to her some remembrance of the journey. What would it be tonight? Then the doorbell rang.

A handsome lad, some six feet in height, carrying a cane in his black-gloved right hand, rushed up to the gray-haired woman and hugged her closely.

"Mother, Mother!" he exclaimed, sighing contently.

"My boy! my boy!" she whispered while a look of ecstatic joy shone on her face. Then—"What souvenir did you bring me?"

For one moment he was dreadfully afraid of breaking down—horrified lest self-control desert him. With an effort he finally conquered his emotions.

"Listen, Mother," he began, "some six months ago you wrote me a letter—the sweetest epistle I have ever received. In it you told me how you loved me—that yours was a strong maternal affection which neither separation nor death could alter or diminish. The note affected me strangely. One cloudy morning in the trenches I was reading it over for the *n*th time. The light effects were poor and all unconsciously I held the paper in my right hand a little above the trenches. Suddenly I felt a dull ache in the arm, and the paper fluttered to the ground. I had received a *souvenir de la grande guerre*. Blood poisoning set in; the arm had to be amputated. The delay in New York was caused over my anxiety to obtain a false arm that might even deceive Mother."

"Hush, hush, Mater! Don't cry!" And the boy held her again to his heart. "You know I'm rather happy about this artificial limb. I never look at it without thinking of you, and of how I love you."

The Wounds of Christ! They are inseparably united with each and every one of us who caused them!

STICK TO YOUR PADDLE

THERE are sections of the Columbia River dangerous in the extreme—parts so rich in unseen rocks and death-dealing whirlpools that it is almost certain death to attempt the passage.

Yet the Indians have but little difficulty in making their way safely through those treacherous rapids. Sitting tailor-fashion in their birch-bark canoes, and holding lightly to their paddles, they steer their course as dexterously as a New Yorker threads his way up Fifth Avenue during Christmas week. Ask them the reason of all their success and they will reply in their simple childlike fashion, "we cling to our paddle."

I say to you, dear friends, "Cling to *your* paddle." If you wish to avoid shipwreck, drowning, and death—eternal death—in your journey over life's stormy river, then cling stoutly to the Church. She is the only instrument that will land you safely on the other side. She is your paddle; with this paddle—the only infallible aid—and only with it—may you escape the rocks of unbelief, the whirlpools of sin and unlawful pleasures. Remember always the old Indians' advice—"Cling to your paddle."

THE BEST VALENTINE OF ALL

MY FRIEND is a noble soul. He has been married for a number of years and has four lovely children. Each year he gives his wife an expensive present on the anniversary of their wedding. On their last anniversary, however, because of financial reverses and bad investments, he could give her but little. He determined that in lieu of a gift he would write to her and tell her just how much he appreciated her goodness and love. He wrote:

"My beloved Wife,

"Nine years ago today you did me the great honor of trusting me with your future. For nine years you have been a devoted wife, an inspiring sweetheart, a brave happy pal.

"Through the many trials that have come to us since we ventured on our little partnership, you have stayed faithful by me—through discouragement, through tragedy, and through many happy days. But for you, dear, I fear that I should not have had the heart to keep at it.

"I wish to tell you these things because I fear that in the thoughtlessness of everyday life I have

often neglected to say the things that are always fresh and sweet in my heart. More often than you think, though, I am conscious of the great fortune that is mine in having as a life companion a living loving valentine.

"Please believe me, dear, when I say that I love you most dearly; that I am proud of you because you have been so patient and so brave through our varied fortunes and that I am looking confidently forward to the time when I can make the dreams come true that I first had when I asked you to come with me, nine years ago.

"Nine years is a long time in many ways—it has been but a brief month to me. In my mind, you seem younger and sweeter and certainly more attractive than on our first valentine day. Whether it shall ever be my fortune to achieve some of the great things I have been dreaming about for us, I know that I have been made a better, braver, and fuller man by the influence of your comradeship.

"I hope, dear, that before another nine valentine days roll by, I shall be able to tell you in a more elaborate style that I love you.

Devotedly."

Does it not revive our hope in human nature to read a human document like the above? Does it not argue well for the influence of the Catholic Faith in everyday married life to see such steadfast love and devotion?

THE BRAKEMAN'S TALE

IT WAS on a white cot in the little hospital close to the railroad that I first met the brakeman. The night previous, he donned his overalls to start out on the run, but his wife objected to his going out on that trip. Over and over again she said to him, "I don't wish you to go. Something tells me that you are going to meet with trouble. Please, O please, grant me my request and stay home."

However, the brakeman felt in duty bound to answer the call, and he started on the trip. About twenty miles from the terminal, they were obliged to go into siding in order to let the passenger train have the right of way. There were a thundering noise and a shrill whistle, then the conductor signaled to the brakeman to get ready to pull out on the main track again.

Our friend climbed up the brake beams with lantern in hand to give the signal to go ahead. It was a cold bleak night with plenty of ice and sleet on top of the car. He had no sooner given the signal to go ahead than the lantern slipped from his grasp and fell through the air. The brakeman in falling between the cars must have struck his head, for

when he awoke a few moments later he found himself on his back, balanced between the cars on the coupling pin. Just imagine, an unconsious man balanced between two moving freight cars! The engineer saw the lantern fall to the ground and he immediately applied his brakes and brought the freight train to a standstill. Afterwards the fact was brought to light that the brakeman's wife had spent fully two hours after her husband had departed, in kneeling by her bedside, praying for him.

After all, very few of us will deny that Tennyson was right when he said,

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

THE EVIL EFFECTS OF ONE SIN

HIGH up on the summit of the Canadian Rockies, close to a snow-capped peak, a little stream bubbles forth, and begins almost immediately to throw itself down the mountain side. Before long, however, its waters separate. The streamlet on the right rushes on, on until finally it reaches the long-looked-for shores of the Atlantic. The streamlet on the left also hurries off over rocky ledges and treacherous chasms; through wind-swept plains and smiling valleys. It journeys ever onward until at last it loses itself in the blue peaceful depths of the Pacific. How strange, that waters from the same spring should in the end be so widely separated! The place of separation is called the Great Divide, the Great Western Divide.

My dear friends, in each and every one of our lives, there are Great Divides. The Great Divide may be a temptation vanquished, or perhaps a yielding to a deliberate venial sin, and behold, we turn to the right or the left as the case may be. Because of that one action of ours, God either showers His blessings upon us and we turn to the right—speeding ever on, on until we reach that

ocean of delights which He has prepared for us; or, if the action be a bad one, He withdraws those efficacious graces, and, though we have yet sufficient strength to overcome, yet do we succumb and turn to the left journeying ever onwards on the river of misery until we reach, not happiness but sorrow, not heaven but hell. Oh, how easy in the beginning to keep to the right! How difficult once we turn to the left to work against the stream! What energy is required to battle back up that high mountain, to get back to that summit and begin all over again!

THE FIRST SHALL BE LAST AND THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST

AMONG the Akowa Bushmen, a strange race of African dwarfs, are many conjurers. Some of their tricks are wonderful in the extreme and require constant practice and skill.

They will, for instance, take a bow and arrow and shooting the arrow straight up will follow it by a second arrow which will cleave the first missile and shoot unobstructed into the sky. Of course, the second arrow is shot with much greater force, but, nevertheless, the aim is most accurate.

Strange and seemingly impossible as this trick may appear, does not the same feat take place in the supernatural world? The sluggard travels slowly along and is soon passed by the Saint who even at the eleventh hour pushes onward so much more earnestly and fervently in his work that he easily outdistances all competitors, for:

"The first shall be last and the last shall be first."

THE FAILURE OF SUCCESS

THE two travelers discovered the mountain about the same time, and both were enamored of its beauty. The first said, "I'm going to build my cabin on this very spot where I can meditate on the grandeur of that distant, snow-covered peak, where I can watch the varying effects of sun and clouds upon it, and fill my soul with its loveliness, always thanking the Creator for this magnificent Cathedral He erected for me." And so, indeed, he did.

The other traveler, impatient at being so far away from the towering pile, determined to reach the foot, and even to scale the very top which few had reached. He spent considerable time at this arduous task, and finally, after weeks of toil and hardship, realized his desire, and stood on the uppermost peak. But what a disappointment! The view was as nothing compared to the vision from the valley. He had lost time, energy, peace of heart, and all to no purpose.

The majority of us, like the foolish mountain climber, spend ourselves and our energies striving after an elusive peak called Success, utterly oblivious of the benefits and blessings about us. Some

Sielen

few—some very few—reach the top only to be disappointed. Our viewpoint of life is wrong. It is based on the assumption that the end of the trail, just because it is the end, must of necessity be more beautiful, more desirable—that distant fields are perforce always greener, always more enticing.

THE GIANT PINE TREE

FAR up in the Canadian Rockies, close to the coast, a giant pine tree stood on the mountain top, —alone, solitary, proud. For years it had withstood the elements, waxing strong in spite of storms that had annihilated its less hardy brethren.

It began to consider itself as something apart, something independent of ordinary laws, something above the vicissitudes of time. Lovers singled it out as a trysting place. Robbers made it a rendezvous for nightly meetings; the wild cat chose its branches as a convenient perch for watching both foes and prey.

Then one day a storm cloud passed up the bay. The pine tree was by no means worried. It had passed through many a more vicious encounter with pennants flying and plumes waving. But a little chain of fire suddenly darted from this cloud, and a moment later a mighty crash was heard. The great pine tree lay shattered and dead.

"Strange," said the wild cat, "that the Mighty One should be destroyed while little pines all about are safe."

Strange? Not at all. The same Power that caused

this tree to tower like a giant above its fellows, had now laid it low, just as He had confounded the builders of the Tower of Babel. For every Tower of Babel within the heart of the individual or within the heart of a nation must, sooner or later, be destroyed, for,

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted those of low degree."

THE GRAIN OF WHEAT

THERE is a certain field division in almost every war, recruited entirely from men who wish to conceal themselves, who wish to be unknown, who desire to lose their identity completely. We call it "the Foreign Legion," and the dare-devil exploits and reckless courage of its members have made this foreign legion famous.

There is a section also in the service of Christ, the King, recruited entirely of men who wish to lose themselves, who desire to give up everything in order to hold and ever increase the King's domains on the very outskirts of civilization. They, too, ought to be dubbed, "Officers in the Foreign Legion of Honor." We call them simply "missionaries." They are those who practically in their own lives fulfill the words of Christ:

"Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."[1]

[1]John xii, 24, 25.

THE JANITOR'S STORY

THE great author sat in his room pounding out a fresh "best seller." So successful had he been in pandering to the tastes of the multitude, that he was able to employ not alone a janitor but a valet as well. The great man usually took a walk every morning and the janitor made it a point, while cleaning up his room, to appropriate to himself a few of the author's cigars. This day the janitor was somewhat disgruntled because his employer had not left the room, and so, accosting the valet, he inquired about the matter.

"What's he doing in there?" he asked.

"He thinks he's thinking," replied the valet.

Is this not true of a number of the would-be intellectuals of the present era? They *think* they are thinking. They have no sense of responsibility, nothing to recommend their writings except the fact that they startle. Almost anyone is able to throw a bomb. A wise man never indulges in this hazardous sport, unless it be absolutely necessary.

THE LITTLE DANCER

SHE was just a little dancing girl from the bright, gay walks of Broadway and yet at heart she was as noble, as great, and as pure as the majority of those who walk in the higher strata of society. She became enamored of a fine young farmer lad whom she had met in New York, and eventually she came West to his little frontier town to marry the man of her choice.

After the priest had performed the marriage ceremony, he turned to the little dancer and said, "You will find quite a change between the life you are going to lead and the life you were previously engaged in—a great difference between Main Street and Broadway."

The little girl turned with eyes full of love to the man she had chosen to rule over her heart, and sweetly said to him and to the priest:

"Father, any Main Street is Broadway when Johnnie is with me!"

Years ago the same sentiments were thus expressed:

"Whither soever thou shalt go, I will go. . . . Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."—Ruth, i, 16.

THE LOVE OF GOD

WE WERE speeding on toward the west, and the outlook from the train windows was dismal in the extreme. Desolation seemed everywhere; for we were passing through the desert. For days the eye had not rested on anything but bleak, arid wastes of land, sand dunes and dwarfed clumps of sage brush.

One evening, however, just before sunset, the train swept around the shoulder of a high hill, and, in an instant, a beautiful green valley lay spread out before us. It was a glorious sight: White cottages with rose-covered verandas, green groves of oranges with their golden fruit reflecting the evening sun, cows browsing in the meadows, laughing children romping about the houses, busy at their innocent games, while their elders sat in the shade of the trees, discussing the events of the day. Assuredly it was a remarkable change from the barren tracts of land we had just passed through, and all this had been affected by water—water brought from the nearby mountain.

Such a change God works when His love takes possession of a soul. What water is to the soil—

that Divine Love is to the human soul. It transforms it. It beautifies it. It fructifies it. It makes it rich in all sorts of virtues and begins in this life what shall continue throughout all eternity—the reign of love.

THE MAN AT THE WHEEL

A TEACHER once asked a little boy what was the most dangerous part of an automobile. The little boy replied, "The most dangerous part of an automobile is the 'nut' that turns the wheel."

It is true that a reckless driver with no sense of responsibility can very easily do a great deal of harm, but how much more dangerous are the so-called intellectual leaders who drive people by word and example to a moral wreck, who destroy their faith by words and ruin their lives by the example they set.

THE MISSIONARY'S HOUSE

FATHER JUDGE narrates in one of his letters from Nome, Alaska, that when he first went there he was compelled to build, with his own hands, a house in which to live. He constructed two rooms, one a living room and his study, and another a little apartment for the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Judge is dead, but his spirit still lives on. And from the snowbound regions of the far North he calls out to us: "Two Rooms! Two Rooms!"

In every one of our lives there ought to be two rooms, two strict divisions. There are the everyday things which duty compels us to interest ourselves in—the material things that of necessity occupy our minds—The finite things.

Then we should have another room—a room apart, an upper chamber where we may go as frequently as one passes from one room to another and converse with the Creator of this world and the Lord of all.

THE ONLY WAY TO SUCCEED

WHEN Theodore Roosevelt was President of the United States, he determined to acquaint the world with the strength and the efficiency of the navy. There were many who were opposed to the trip around the world, alleging that it was a useless expenditure of money and of ships. The controversy became so acute that the President was obliged to meet his opponents on the floor of the Senate. After vividly describing the advantages of this venture in the knowledge of our country that would undoubtedly follow such a trip and the subsequent good-fellowship we should obtain, he won the day by concluding:

"I prefer that we wear our ships out rather than have them rust out."

A great deal of good might be accomplished for national peace and unity if we acted the same way as regards ourselves. To wear ourselves out, to spend the last ounce of strength in the service of the Master—this is to succeed even if the success be below what we originally set out to attain.

THE PALMIST

MOST of us are familiar with a quaint old picture that depicts a decrepit octogenarian looking down upon a sweet-faced child of seven. The little girl is absorbed in studying the old man's hand, pretending to read from it his future. Finally she looks up at him with a pathetic smile, and says:

"Grandfather, you are going on a long, long journey."

The child had touched upon a truth—the old man would soon be compelled to set out upon that journey whence no one returns. Yet not alone the old but the young as well are called, oftentimes very suddenly, to set out on such a trip. Ordinary prudence requires that we be prepared, ready whenever the summons comes. Continual alertness, like the soldier ever on the *qui vive* to grab his haversack, and go where his commander sends him—that is what is required of us.

"But this know ye, that if the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open. Wherefore be ye also ready because at what hour ye know not the Son of Man will come."

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

I REMEMBER being strongly impressed as a boy by one of Meirsonivi's paintings. It represented the retreat of the French army from Moscow, and recalled in a very vivid manner the horrors of that memorable winter. The grand old commander, General Ney was the central figure. He was vainly endeavoring to protect the rear division of his disheartened soldiers from the fierce onslaught of the enemy and allow, at the same time, the main body to continue their retreat. Kneeling on the ground near the spot where their general stood, were two soldiers. They were severely wounded, and their faces were pale in the extreme from recent loss of blood and the cruel privations they had undergone. And yet, crippled though they were, they never ceased firing at the enemy. Determination in fact was written all over their haggard countenances—the determination to fight till their last breath for the *fleur-de-lis* and the honor of the Republic. No wonder that Napoleon could dictate to the world with such men at his command.

Often I have thought a like devotedness and loyalty to the cause should be found in each soldier

of the Cross. Are you crippled? Are you unable to preach to learned audiences and educated assemblages? Then go among the poor; in simple, plain language teach them their catechism and the means of saving their souls. Are you confined to bed and obliged to spend your days in solitude and sufferings? Then follow the example of a Louis de Ponte, or a blessed Peter Faber and write—tell men about the King we serve. And let death alone be the only obstacle that shall prevent you from spreading His conquests.

THE SPORT

BECAUSE he was immaculate in dress, and because he possessed such courteous, old-world manners, and because of his infectious laughter and cheerful ways—because of these we dubbed him, "The Sport." This *nom de guerre* was bestowed long before we knew him intimately—before he had wormed his way into our hearts. He bore it as he did everything else, gayly, nonchalantly, as a soldier carries an empty sleeve.

One day the test came. An automobile accident occurred; and "The Sport" was one of the victims. His back was broken and no hope was held out for his recovery. It was then and only then we discovered the real character of our friend. He lived for over six months and was invariably the same cheerful care-free, courteous fellow. When you entered the sickroom he greeted you with a smile, rather wistful it was at times, for his sufferings were great, and yet withal, a brave, courageous smile that could treat success and failure, pleasure and pain with the same aloofness, the same detachment. Then he anxiously inquired of his visitors if they were comfortable, if they were in need of anything. But

when the conversation turned to his own affliction, he had a quiet subtle way of somehow changing it so that few of his friends realized the different topic on the tape. This was his crowning success, never to appear as a pious patient individual; for he well knew that *Ars est celare artem.*

In this manner his checkered career ran its course. So thoroughly, so completely did he play his part that in some strangely beautiful and mysterious way his friends have come to consider the word "sport" as something fine, something gayly heroic, something like "thoroughbred," that beggars description.

THE STORY OF THE YOUNG TOURIST

THERE was once a lad of some seventeen summers who decided that he had already a sufficiency of book knowledge, and judged that the best way of educating himself and broadening his mind was to travel for a year or two. Accordingly, he set out to visit the principal cities of Europe, interesting himself especially in masterpieces in painting and in sculpture. One day, while intently occupied in examining a more than ordinarily risque sketch of one of the moderns, he was abruptly accosted by an elderly gentleman:

"What are you doing here?" questioned the stranger.

"Educating myself," answered the youth.

"Educating yourself for what," scoffed the Sage—"for heaven or for hell?"

THE TRAINING FOR THE BATTLE OF LIFE

THERE are those who still maintain that the occasion makes the man, never pausing to reflect that such a time only serves to bring out those qualities which ultimately confirm the judgments of honest men as to the merits of the victor, or reveal the lack of those gifts which eventually spell failure.

I have in mind a young man who solemnly pronounced a pugilist to be a great fighter because of his conduct during the short time in the ring. Nothing could be more unfair. There is infinitely more to fighting than mere hooks and jabs. There is vastly more courage required to prepare properly for a fight than there is to make the fight itself. It is a rarer type of courage, too; a moral rather than a physical bravery. Very few fighters suffer great physical pain in the ring, but they suffer tremendously in training for big fights. There are the pangs of hunger for rich food, the constant demand for pleasure, wine, and romance which must be denied consistently, the strenuous grind that winnows the heroes from the cowards. *Finis Coronat Opus,* said the Latins—The End Crowns the Endeavor.

Whether that endeavor be a physical encounter or a moral struggle, it matters not. The end will demonstrate whether we have merited victory or defeat—whether we be classed with cowards or with heroes.

THE UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A YOUNG Episcopalian lady, whose husband was a doctor, said one day to a priest of a large eastern Catholic Church, and it is the fact that with all this vaunting about unity, there still exist many sects and orders within its pale. You have the Franciscans, the Trappists, the Dominicans, and many others all differing as to rule, training, and even in habit. How do you reconcile this with the unity you hold so dear?"

The father was amazed at such a misconception in a woman otherwise well informed, and it puzzled him for a moment just how to bring home the truth to her in the clearest simplest way.

"Madam," he finally rejoined, "you are doubtlessly acquainted with many people in the medical profession. You realize that the general purpose in the study of medicine is to cure bodily diseases and alleviate human ills. You are also aware that in this profession, besides general practitioners, there are likewise many specialists—nerve, stomach, lung, and heart specialists. Yet these, though attending in a peculiar manner to diverse parts of the human body, are all, nevertheless, authorized physicians.

They have their degree; they are all of them, in other words, M.D.'s.

"Now the object of the Catholic Church is to cure not bodily infirmities of man, but his spiritual maladies. To this end, besides general practitioners —valiant self-sacrificing secular priests, who form a strong phalanx, and accomplish wonders in the healing of poor wounded human nature, the Church also makes use of specialists. The Carthusians and Trappists are especially devoted to contemplation and penance. The Dominicans' hobby is preaching. The Jesuits give most of their attention to the education of youth and to the spreading of the Faith among barbarians. And so of all other orders in the Church, each follows in the lines marked out by its founder. Yet their one object is the curing of souls. They all belong to the same profession. They are all spiritual M.D.'s or, if you wish, R.C.'s."

The lady was perfectly satisfied and went her way with a truer notion of Catholic Unity.

THOROUGHBREDS

ONCE upon a time a stout-hearted little colt, the "John P. Grier," moved into the lead on the "stretch" and for a few fleeting moments thrilled forty thousand spectators with an ominous silence.

For the first time in his racing career, Man O'War was really challenged. For the first time in his racing career, he felt the sting of a whip. He lengthened his stride a trifle—his action became a little smoother and faster. He moved up in flying strides to win. He had withstood his one great challenge like the good thoroughbred he was.

Contrary to popular conception, the Saints of God are about the only real thoroughbreds we meet in this valley of tears. They alone meet squarely and honestly the challenge received. It matters little from where the challenge comes—whether from within or without, from self-love or the malice of enemies, it is all the same to them. The race must be won at all costs. So they quicken their stride—more time is given to prayer, a more thorough guard over the senses—and lo! the race is won, and the victor is crowned!

TIME

THERE'S a quaint little hourglass in a quaint little garden in California, and on the pedestal are inscribed the words:

Pereunt et Imputantur.

They are lost, these little pellets of time, and they are charged up against us. We can judge of the preciousness of time only in its relation to eternity. Men guard against poverty and misery because of sudden death by taking out life insurance, thus eliminating the consequences of an unexpected demise; but in buying peace and joy in an after life, we take no such care. We have the means at hand to enable us to take out our spiritual life insurance —the right use of time.

Is there nothing one can do to shake that sublime faith most Catholics have in themselves as regards their future? Is there nothing one can do to impress upon their minds that the great work of time is preparation for eternity; and that one cannot kill time without injuring eternity?

TREES IN WINTER

THERE is nothing quite so forlorn and gaunt and lonesome as bare trees in the winter time. They appear so pathetically alone, so despondent.

But let the rays of the winter sun shine upon their snowy branches for but a moment and the scene immediately changes. They sparkle with an effulgence and splendor that is glorious to behold.

Is it not about the same with human hearts? Thoughtless criticism, harshness, lack of sympathy serve to suppress and congeal them. But when we learn how to reach them and warm them by kindness and love and affection, they take courage and begin to glow with renewed hope and splendor, changing the world from a desolate, lonesome place to one bright with sunshine and splendor and glory.

"Men might be better, if we better deemed of them. The worst way to improve the world is to condemn."

TRUE ARTISTRY

MAY McAVOY, the young Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer star, tells how, as a child, she had always longed to go abroad. When asked by one of the girls on the movie lot just what place she desired to visit, she replied: "Rome."

"That is because you are a Catholic," was the rejoiner.

"It's because she is an artist," the director flung in.

A fine distinction, and one worthy to be remembered, especially since it came from the mouth of one who is not a Catholic. This same actress goes on to narrate how worried she became when told she was to go to Rome and have the part of Esther in "Ben Hur." She told her troubles to the director and again he gave a splendid solution.

"Don't worry," he said, "Rome will help you." And then, as an afterthought, he concluded: "That's what she's been doing for two thousand years—helping people."

How true it is! Rome has been and will continue down to the end of time to help people find themselves. She is the city on a hill, the beacon guiding this storm-tossed world in religion, art, science, in everything that is worth while for a man's temporal and eternal welfare.

WHY CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

OUT in the broad North Atlantic amid the dashing and rushing of breakers is an alluring region called Sargasso Sea, which hides in its very calmness dangerous seaweed. The heedless voyager, caught in the meshes of this lurking weed, is carried to depths unknown, there to wrestle, but in vain, with this fair deceiver of the sea.

Watching on the bridge that spans this pleasure-seeking world, one may see numberless youths and maidens rushing toward what appears to be harmless, but which, alas! has proved to be but another Sargasso Sea. In the too-far-outstretched arms of Pleasure these hopes of nations are being entangled in a veritable maelstrom of ruin.

The entreating words of the Gentle Master, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," are forgotten, are drowned in the mad rush to Pleasure's halls.

WREATHS

STRANGERS about to leave Hawaii for the mainland are often presented with a lei to place around their necks. This is done in the hope that the travelers later, when out at sea, will cast the lei overboard and allow it to drift back as a token of love and affection to those who are left behind.

In journeying through life, we ought to throw overboard many leis, innumerable wreaths, numerous good deeds to drift back to those whom we have left behind, to encourage them by example to dispense in turn to others, kindness, love, and charity, for,

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood."

VOICES

YOU hear them on all sides; down the busy mart they strike the ear, some strident, some subdued; in the far-away depths they greet us, in the chirp of a bird, in the weird call of the whippoorwill; they all lead us on; whether in mountains or in valleys the persistent drone strikes the ear. We cannot avoid them; we cannot but hear them.

It is the same with these internal voices. They come to us from time to time; not alone to Joan of Arc were these voices. Voices of good urging us on to noble deeds and self-sacrificing lives. Voices of evil calling us on to follow the lower instincts of passion. Which voice are we following? The good or the evil; one we must follow for we cannot serve two masters.

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